Personality:

POINT: Eysenck proposed that there are certain personality types which are more prone to develop an addiction. This is the concept of ‘addictive personality’ which explains why some people become addicted when others don’t, despite both trying the same experience. The way a person behaves can change from situation to situation. However, there is likely to be some consistency in the way a person behaves in different situations and this is reflected by the personality they have. To measure this, psychologists typically use questionnaires and many have found that people with certain personalities are more likely to become addicts.

Personality is based on 3 dimensions:

- Extroversion (seek external stimulation to increase arousal)
- Neuroticism (experience negativity, depression and anxiety)
- Psychoticism (related to hostility)
One risk factor that could explain Andy’s addiction to gaming is Personality. The fact that Andy ‘lacks confidence in himself’ suggests he may have low self-esteem. Baumeister suggested that low self-esteem may cause people to behave in ways that are self-defeating in order to escape self-awareness. Furthermore, Taylor et al found that boys who had very low self-esteem at age 11 were at higher risk for addiction (particularly drug dependency) at age 20. This suggests that self-esteem may be a relevant risk factor in Andy developing his addiction whilst at university.

Peers may also act as a risk factor for Andy developing his addiction to gaming – Andy plays ‘with his old school friends’ which could be explained by Social Identity Theory (Abrams and Hogg). This theory assumes group members adopt norms and behaviours that are central to the social identity of the group to which they belong. In Andy’s peer group it could be that his status as a ‘gamer’ is central to the social identity of the group, and individuals are likely to be similar to one another in their gaming habits.

Andy may have developed a gaming addiction because he is stressed in his first year at university. As he is ‘finding his course difficult’ this may have led to him developing prolonged stress which significantly affects the mesolimbic dopamine pathways and the prefrontal cortex (a part of the brain which depends on environmental experiences for development). Andy’s prefrontal cortex may not be functioning properly which would lead him to play more games on the internet.

Finally, Andy may be self-medicating to cope with the tension in his life at university; it may be that gaming relieves the anxiety he feels in everyday life and he plays games to cope with stress.
The media uses advertising to influence individuals and to encourage the sale of tobacco, alcoholic drinks and lottery cards. For example, despite the national lottery being a soft form of gambling, it still emphasises the slogan ‘It Could Be You’ suggesting that you have a chance to win, yet it fails to highlight the high odds of winning.

Research has suggested that exposure to advertising may lead to addictive behaviour. Atkin et al (1984) found that 12-17 year olds who had been exposed to higher levels of advertising were more likely to approve of and engage in under-age drinking. This was explained to be due to an increased awareness of alcoholic products and indicates that there is a link between the media and drinking alcohol.

Advertising of smoking is also linked with addiction; Chapman & Fitzgerald (1982) found that under-age smokers reported a preference for heavily advertised brands. This indicates that advertisements in the media have a large influence on addictive behaviours, such as smoking, especially in young adults.